


Avoid these common CV and resume mistakes!

A training specialist offers advice to a job seeker at a resume-building seminar in  Arizona. (© AP Images)

Pity the poor job recruiter who has to sort through an inbox that is usually overflowing with applications from would-be employees. If you are one of the hundreds or even thousands of people competing for the same position, you will need your resume or curriculum vitae (CV) to stand out from the others. In most cases it is a recruiter's first impression of you, so a well-written and well-coordinated document is your only chance to get your foot in the door.

Tom LeaMond is a career consultant at Devex, a business and recruiting organization that focuses on global development. In a [webinar](#), he offered some helpful tips that many job candidates overlook in their efforts to impress future employers.

- Remember that the top of the page where you list your summary and key qualifications is the most important section, since it will determine if the reviewer wants to read more. Be sure to include job-specific keywords and phrases that match the position description.
- Use bullet points in the sections where you describe your job experience, in a manner that LeaMond called the CAR (context + action + results) approach. For example, "Led team of five direct reports in a previously underperforming office. After six months, our office achieved the fastest growth rate in the organization."
- Give a professional-sounding email address as your means of contact (for example, name@gmail.com instead of footballer@hotmail.com), but don't use the address at your current job.
- CVs can vary from country to country, so search online for sample resumes from a specific country if you are unfamiliar with what is normally included or not included there.

LeaMond said the most common mistake people make is not having a well-written CV that shows their experience and is tailored to the job description.

For more information on how to present yourself to a prospective employer, be sure to read the articles on writing a [personal biography](#) and an [admissions essay](#). You can also take a free YALI Network [Online Course](#). Be sure to check back with the [YALI Network](#) blog for additional advice on writing and other tips for your professional development.

Writing an exciting personal biography



An attention-grabbing biography is an important resource for any professional. This biography can be used as part of your resume/CV, school or Fellowship applications, on your social media pages, in cover letters, and much more. It can be a key factor in decisions as to whether or not you are accepted for a new position or opportunity. It needs to be polished, thorough, and capture who you are in just a few sentences. Below are our top tips for creating an exciting personal biography.

Top Biography Tips

1. **Develop an outline** or fill out the [YALI Network Biography Questionnaire](#) [PDF 107 kb] to get started. Then, remember you don't have to use every idea—pare down your content to the best of the best. Use the Biography Questionnaire as a resource to build your own personal narrative – it is not a requirement for any applications or the YALI Network.
 2. Keep it short—aim for one paragraph. Readers will spend a minute at most on your biography so make sure you only include the **most important and relevant information**.
 3. Use the third person, which is **more professional than first person**. Third person would be “John moved to Nigeria when he was 12” Instead of “I moved to Nigeria when I was 12.”
 4. When describing your accomplishments, don't write a long list. **Select one or two** that you are most proud of and provide specifics.
 - a. **Can be improved:** Sam volunteers at his local school, has two advanced degrees, speaks three languages, and is passionate about music education.
 - b. **Good:** Sam created a choir program for underprivileged girls. He asked the telecom company where he worked in advertising if they would be interested in mentoring the girls. By the end of the first year, more than 20 girls had received not only a music education, but also gained new computer and other professional skills.
 5. Avoid careless mistakes—**take your time** and don't wait until the last minute to write your bio. If you get stuck, step away to clear your mind. Make sure you edit the bio multiple times and ask someone you trust to edit it as well.
 6. Talk about your **specific, achievable goals**. Stating that you plan to become a tech entrepreneur is vague; instead, discuss a specific goal, like starting a company that develops digital learning tools and programs for schools.
 7. **Don't forget the basics**. Even though your bio should be short, make sure to include your name, profession, education, years of experience, etc.
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Using LinkedIn to Tell Your Organization's Story

Did you know that nearly 5,000 YALI Network members use the [YALI Network LinkedIn Group](#) to connect with one another and to grow their professional networks?

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social network that helps its users make professional connections, find jobs, discover leads and more. Users create their own professional profiles — similar to a digital resume — and establish connections with colleagues, potential partners and businesses.

If you are looking to share stories with an educated, affluent and professional audience, consider using LinkedIn. Its ability to engage a highly targeted, donor-rich demographic makes it a powerful distribution channel for social impact organizations.

The best way to share stories on LinkedIn is through status updates on your organization's Company Page. When sharing content on LinkedIn, be sure to post links and use images. Posts with links to other content have twice the engagement rate of posts without, and posts with images have a 98 percent higher comment rate.

Organizations should engage with their LinkedIn followers on a regular basis by encouraging them to participate in the conversations spurred by the stories you share in your status updates. You can further this participation by asking follow-up questions and writing status updates with clear calls to action.

To increase your organization's visibility on LinkedIn, you should create original content, encourage others to share your content, and give people a clear reason to engage with your content.

This article is adapted from Hatch for Good's [Guide to LinkedIn](#). Hatch for Good is a platform that provides people and organizations with the tools they need to create powerful stories and inspire positive action in the digital age. Visit [Hatch for Good's website](#) to view additional resources.

The Importance of the Cover Letter

After putting together a concise resume, the job seeker needs to sit down and write a cover letter.

"Cover letters make a difference, even short ones," Susan Adams writes in "How to Write a Cover Letter," an article published in *Forbes* magazine. "Don't ever send a boilerplate."

Adams advises applicants to use the first line of the cover letter to mention a mutual contact. She advises applicants to use a more formal style of writing instead of abbreviations and acronyms, and to proofread the letter carefully.

Adams says experts like cover letters in which the applicant names the job he wants early on and provides a brief summary of his career and accomplishments. The letter should end with a request for a meeting and when the applicant plans to get in touch.

And, importantly, Adams says, cover letters of less than one page — or about four paragraphs — are best.

Photo credit: AP Images

Get Your Resume Noticed

Photo credit: Shutterstock



Hiring managers get loads of resumes. *Forbes* magazine writer Jacquelyn Smith, in a column titled “Six Ways to Avoid the Resume Black Hole,” writes that applicants can make sure their resumes get noticed if they follow these tips.

1. **Network** into the company. If you know someone in the company, you can ask that person to send your resume to the human resources department with a recommendation.
 2. Use **keywords**. Smith says human resources expert Rosemary Haefner advises applicants to use some of the same words and phrases that appear in the job posting in their resume in order to get it noticed. But, Haefner cautions applicant to not just “cut and paste the job posting into your resume or cover letter.”
 3. Have someone **proofread** your resume. Even a small typo may turn off an employer, Smith says. “Before sending your resume, have at least one person you trust review it so that it can have a better chance of catching the eyes of the employer.”
 4. Keep it **simple**. Avoid graphics, logos and other things that may distract the person reading the resume.
 5. Take an **entrepreneurial approach** to the job-search process. Research the company’s hiring process so you know which official does the hiring. Follow-up with a phone call.
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